

considering real tax reform, it is more important now than ever that the House pass this bill again to demonstrate consistent support for bringing common sense to our tax system. As I retire from Congress to run for Governor of Oklahoma, it is my hope that this legislation will be passed again, and to that end I am turning over sponsorship of this bill to a long-standing activist for tax reform, Representative JIM DEMINT. I urge all reformers to join with Representative DEMINT in advancing the cause of reform by working to pass this bill.

TRIBUTE TO MR. JOHN BRIGANCE

HON. PETE SESSIONS

OF TEXAS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, February 14, 2002

Mr. SESSIONS. Mr. Speaker, after over 61 years of federal service, an icon of an exemplary, dedicated civil service has just retired. Mr. John Brigance, the former Director of Contracting for all of Southwestern Division, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, known as "Mr. Procurement" for his valued expertise in contracting, was recognized throughout the Corps. Underlining his commitment is the fact that in addition to his 61 years of federal service, he retired with over 5,100 hours of unused sick leave, about two and a half years' worth.

During his career, Mr. Brigance has been called upon to accomplish many significant projects for the Corps of Engineers. A former Chief of Engineers dubbed him "Mr. Procurement" because he said Brigance quite literally wrote the book on contracting. That is a true statement. Between 1982 and 1995, he chaired a Headquarters task force and penned many of the regulations governing Corps contract procurement procedures. He has risen from an under clerk typist in the Corps' Galveston District, when he started on January 6, 1941, to a GS 14 in charge of all contracting for the Southwestern Division. In the late 1970s, he was a guest lecturer on small business contract administration at Syracuse University. In that same time frame, because of his reputation in emergency contracting procedures, he also prepared and taught the first-ever Corps contracting course on emergency management operations. Called to duty on November 27, 1942, Brigance served 3 years with the Army—18 months Stateside in training, and 18 months in the Pacific Theater working with an engineer parts supply outfit.

Mr. Brigance has also been noted as a wonderful coworker and fellow human being. A former colleague called him "a role model for courtesy, civility, and professionalism. He is, quite simply, the most decent man I have met in my career, and a living example of what has made the Corps of Engineers a great organization." Col. Carla Coulson, former Deputy Division Commander, called Brigance's career "a lifetime of selfless service," commended his personal courage and commitment, and acclaimed him as "a dedicated professional with wisdom to spare." Former coworker Hector Vela, retired Division Counsel said, "I've never known John to lie about anything, even his golf game." Vela described Brigance as one who "never speaks bad about anybody" and added, "John made working for the Corps a pleasure." Brigance has been called a "whirlwind" for fast action and

for wearing multiple hats—contracting, small business advisor, inspector general and equal employment opportunity officer. Those people he has mentored have echoed the same sentiments. All speak admiringly of John Brigance.

His life has been well rounded by the many avocations he enjoys—from a love of golf, to annual deer hunts in the Texas hill country, collecting stamps, coins and proof sets, and dancing with his wife of 60 years, Peggy. He shows enthusiasm for each and every activity he pursues, his pronounced activity inspiring others to greater accomplishments.

For his farewell luncheon, his friends and colleagues recognized him with numerous awards and mementos. Among those were the congratulatory letter from President Bush and a presentation by Texas Governor Rick Perry making Brigance an "Admiral of the Texas Navy," an honorary position to recognize his contributions. Perry also named Peggy Brigance a "Yellow Rose of Texas," an honor bestowed only on native Texans.

None of that outdid what the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers gave Brigance after 61 years of service. The Corps' Principal Assistant Responsible for Contracting made the first-ever presentation of the highest Corps award for contracting, the A-F-I-R-E, which stands for "Adaptive, Flexible, Innovative, Responsive and Effective/Efficient", to Brigance. Brig. Gen. David F. Melcher, Southwestern Division commander, also hung the U.S. Army Engineer Regiment Silver Order of the de Fleury medal around Brigance's neck. Honoring John as the 35th inductee into Southwest Division Gallery of Distinguished Civilians rounded out the retirement accolades made in recognition of his commitment, leadership and esteem.

Other awards he received throughout his career include the Decoration for Exceptional Civilian Service award granted by the Secretary of the Army, the Meritorious Civilian Service Award, the Assistant Secretary of the Army Coin and others much too numerous to mention.

Mr. John Brigance and his daily contributions to the United States as a loyal, outstanding and dedicated federal civil servant serve as an inspiration to us all.

EXEMPLARY HONORS FOR SOUTH TEXAS SCHOOLS

HON. SOLOMON P. ORTIZ

OF TEXAS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, February 14, 2002

Mr. ORTIZ. Mr. Speaker, I want to share with my colleagues the incredible pride in my heart, pride for two schools in my hometown of Robstown, TX, the biggest little town in Texas.

The Solomon P. Ortiz Intermediate School and the San Pedro Elementary School in the Robstown Independent School District were chosen by the Texas Education Agency (TEA) as "Exemplary" schools under the State analysis of individual schools in each school district in the state.

Each year, the TEA ranks the state's schools as: low-performing, acceptable, recognized, or exemplary—based on performance on the Texas Assessment of Academic Skills (TAAS, the test given to students in Texas) and on attendance and dropout rates.

Both the Ortiz Intermediate School and San Pedro Elementary are schools with large Hispanic student populations. Since largely Hispanic schools often have to do more with less money, their challenge is greater to compete on a more difficult playing field.

These two schools have found the secret to success. They know that students cannot just up and pass a difficult test—it takes the whole effort of every person who works at each school. It takes teachers, counselors, cafeteria workers, teacher's aids, and school administrators to make the very most of a child's educational experience.

I want to thank each and every staff member for their vision on helping students on their journey to higher education.

These schools capitalized on every single opportunity, every strength, they had to build a team that helped the children of Robstown find the very best in them. Let's not underestimate the stress associated with the TAAS. There is great pressure on the children, on the schools, on the employees—judgements on the school staff is based on the results young people achieve on TAAS.

Teaching children what they need to know to pass the tests, inspiring them to come to school every day, inspiring them to stay in school when they despair, is a monumental task. So the House of Representatives should know that these schools have achieved a great deal.

I ask my colleagues to join me today in commending the Ortiz Intermediate School and San Pedro Elementary School of Robstown, TX, for excellence in education.

TRIBUTE TO SONOMA STATE UNIVERSITY

HON. LYNN C. WOOLSEY

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, February 14, 2002

Ms. WOOLSEY. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to honor one of the finest universities in the great State of California as it celebrates its 40th anniversary.

Located in the heart of the Wine Country, Sonoma State University has over 7,500 students and 1,600 faculty and staff members. Originally established in 1956 as a satellite teaching campus of San Francisco State University, SSU became a member of the California State College System in 1961 and attained University status in 1978. The idyllic campus, set at the base of Sonoma Mountain, now offers over 41 baccalaureate and 14 master's degree programs.

The small liberal arts university has made Sonoma County proud many times over the years. It has been home to Mario Savio, a leader of the Free Speech Movement in Berkeley and a professor in the Physics Department until he passed on in 1996. For the past 25 years, Project Censored, the yearly publication that covers the top underreported news stories of the year, has brought national acclaim to SSU's Sociology department. Most recently, the unveiling of the Environmental Technology Center brought international praise. "The Building That Teaches" combines state-of-the-art energy efficiency and environmental responsibility and is one of only a few like it in the world.